Simon Folland Green

OLD DANCERS

Collected Poems

1973 -2017

SHAKESPEARE AND COMPANY
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Dedication

To Jeff Bien. Great poet. A Master of The Way. A friendship that has never failed.

To Sara and Dominique Debize, twins present at the birth of those poems. Whose help and strength fortified these lines and also solved my enigma of the gemini formula.

To Maryse Emery, painter who taught me the art of pictorial poems. Also a muse...

Foreword

For Mr.Green - a man I am proud to know

Born in a crossfire hurricane
the person who painfully
became wordsmith Simon Green
arrived unexpected in a world aflame.

Later Bournemouth
with fish head in goldfish bowl dream
feeling of child aged e'en before his youth.

"Is he yours then?"
"No I'm just looking after him"

Families, places and names change in ever faster whirl,-I'm your Uncle, call me Dad...House near Old Father Thames, Military family who wouldst charge with the light brigade. Earls court bedsit, the UFO club - adverts and image world; faces twisting within moving walls.

Dixon of Dock Green says "naughty Simon" - A tie and accent saves the day, only Shakespeare (& Co) could laugh the joke true.

Nanterre gave the man ground, words sing true and yet lie often. The poems presented here are dragged from the guts of life, from chaos, from pain, from the soul of a Poet who came in through the outdoor, who was obliged to think sharp from word go. A man of many faces who sees himself as part animal, part Celtic, part British with Lancaster bombers in his blood.

Winston Churchill invented him, Bob Dylan schooled him in a thousand rooms, ravines and bars. George Whitman gave him shelter.

With such thoughts might I invite you to read these words, for they ring as true as the day.

David Frank Allen MC Rennes 2 Psychoanalyst

Contents

Old Dancers	1
Prize Fighters	2
Sleigh Ride	3
When I Am Caught in the Dream of My Demon	4
Tumult	5
Fans on the Ground	6
Predictions of the Poet	7
The Walk to the Monkey Puzzle Tree	8
Cherbourg	9
The Return to Versailles	10
A House Overlooking Two Empty Hands	11
Dark Lantern	12
The Beast	13
La Bécéde	15
Wild Moon	16
Tectonic Platins	17
Bikkie goes forth in the No	18
Love That Goes Round in a Loop	20
Edo to Auvers	21
Are You Blossoming	25
Père Lachaise I & II	27
The Song of Sappho	28

Old Dancers

Old Dancers

The dancers have been reborn
As trees and tangled jasmine bushes

The singers have come back as birds
They make the walls shake with high pitched harmony

The dragons have returned as the four great winds
In four sizes: breeze, wind, gale and
Storm

The fans who could not buy a ticket for the shows
Are wheeling thieving gull demons now

And what about yourself?

Did you jump the line to see the dancing show?
Is that sandwich the gull has stolen
Really yours?

Only I have come back as I was
More blind, less deaf
But as my inimitable self of course

The
Sleepy crocodile

Can you see my eyes?

And what's become of my jaws

Prize Fighters

One hundred thousand butterflies

quivering on the silk screen

drawn by candles in the bedroom

to where the lovers shadow box on the white walls

surrendering at the end of battles

they will start tomorrow

Sleigh-ride

entangled in reins
dragged behind maddened horses
bloodeyed flat out uncontrollable

even having my arms sliced through
with an axe
oh Lord
what a mercy

how did I arrive here in
the cemetery
buried under the snow?

motionless they now stand over me
ears pricked chestnut eyes rolling blind
cylinders of steam
clouds pumping from
black and pink nostrils

a cotton curtain blowing
across the bottom of a large red disk

When I Am Caught in the Dream of My Demon

When I am stripped by
cold that loves the naked
The sweat pearls as I reach for you,
enflamed in a killing fever,
with you, my demon,
counting out my breaths until they stop.

When I am trapped in your killing fever
you, my demon, make me span dream after dream,
your fingers dipping into molten skin,
tracing landscapes in streaks across new-born eyes
teaching me languages of delirium
and to sing perspiring songs
that carve ancient riverbeds down my
vibrating throat.

How I beg to be pitched into ice-blocks,
left suspended to fly eternally always over one spot,
my movements slowed nearly for all time
until the second supporting these, my faintly
beating wings,
is longer, wider, than I imagine the ten galaxies
you've painted across my heaving chest upon which,
you my demon,
count off my singing breaths, counting,
counting until they stop.

When I am awake I wish I was asleep
to be awake with you, my demon,
to be awake, to be asleep
with you, my demon.

Tumult

A racing spring
a noise of ever louder cries
of breaking stone

then night oncoming

black flames flickering on
a soul's last vision
a world
fast drowning
sucked whole within
the tears of bloodied passion

tears of laughter
among the cracking of solid ice

and tumult
tumult
ever dying tumult

Fans On The Ground

Smelling faintly of woodscent
outside my door all through the long winter
two country girls in bark and brown kimonos
arms raised ready to dance

In one more day not even one more week
they will become rich geishas
flicking open their fans of white and pink
cherry blossom
while my eyes are elsewhere

First the last winds of March will blow
then I shall turn around astonished

Am I seeing snowfall in Spring?

Or did the girls just throw
their fans on the ground?

Predictions of the Poet

People from the Poetic Period had rather hoped the pythoness was done with them.

A collection of rabbit-like bones and shreds of scaly skin, a few faded prophecies on stubby columns that illiterates couldn't read or burn, were the proof that rationality and Plato had won out.

Then I started doing it: writhing my coils of rings, hissing my forked tongue, and faceting my eyes of diamond flesh, speaking in tongues, making predictions, sometimes in rhyme, seeing auras around my girlfriends which convinced me they had borrowed their bodies, fallen asleep in them and got caught.

I rolled my eyes up till I saw the whites, streams of painted words pumped out. In other situations you call it bleeding or a plumber.

Someone in the family mentioned art and a rock took off my head.

I am in that group of oracle poets that rides the night rivers and I talk to ducks. Cats know how long I am and Queen Isis of the Night River protects me because nobody else wants the job.

Poets like me die like you but I die before, then I die afterwards. I succumb when the moon is waxed, it whitens the ground where I lie or illuminates my hands as they float on the waves before they are dragged down by their own weight.

I pray the pythoness will swallow me soon because to prophesy my little truths I must rhyme so many petty lies.

The Walk to the Monkey Puzzle Tree

This path is too steep and the hour too hot
black lines of flies around my nose
stack up to drink my human syrup

Ah! these are not insects
but the spirits of frustrated babies that we've left to wail
In short I'm another
hopeless morning in the mountains
watching clouds and moving heavy feet till noon

Then in the pit of a hillside
I find sudden freshness
stretched out among anis stalks,
rusting foxgloves
water flicks from a
broken pipe propped up
amid the long grass

That's where I see
borne away by ants
the body of a dead quail
spread out like a monkey puzzle tree

Sound drips among the wasps
water mixes with the sweat on my lip
the departing quail seems smaller than its eggs

('aren't all of us?' The insects rasp,
'aren't all of us?)

Cherbourg

Slowly sailing away from the evening Norman shore
the ship eye to eye with gulls at the harbour door
slack swell pale blue sky whipped golden light
away I go to Ireland the other side of night

The Return to Versailles

Near the chateau
spires at my feet
I look up at you
my warlord moon
a wheel racing through the silver sky castles

We were never together
in Versailles,
ever
yet I feel as if we lived nowhere else
for longer than our individual lives

Alone but for you
in this place where I let your milklight
run along the edge of my lips
my eyes shut

Hand in hand with an invisible you
amid the white statues
among the wild trees of the disciplined forest

A House Overlooking Two Empty Hands

I dreamt you left me, my tongue in tears,
in a house overlooking two empty hands.

You left me with sand in my mouth,
enough to grow a desert
to listen to the moans of night-buses and cries in
the staircase

You left me to sleep with the Baltic in my bed,
and a quest to hunt down an absurd philosophy
that justified 'always her today, always her tomorrow'

You left me gently stretched on the pendulum
listening to the hours creaking
as they racked me apart

(The seconds and minutes
you had departed with,
I was not to be trusted with them)

now occasionally you post some from afar,
addressed to a house overlooking
two empty hands.

Dark Lantern

With my dark lantern
I seek thee,
By moonless, starless night,
All black,
And filled with rustling and squeaks,
Pattering across empty lanes,
Down tracks I wore myself,
Through sparse woods
Leafy, perfumed.
Damp mist rises
Rain pools scented, unreflecting
Mine were the trails of paw prints
On your crazy paving in the dull mornings.
My dog fox bark you heard in the coveys,
Red and crimson and gold.
I swore I glimpsed your globe of light
For an instant in the night
But it was my own dark lantern I saw
It illuminated only myself.

The Beast 8 8 88

The Beast has saw fangs
and a tail that whips

He is long and thirsty
and is many named

He walks quietly in circles
and his eyes are wide and horrid

He'd rather devour a friend than an enemy

He is striped and often hides
among the shadows of the background

He seeks catastrophe in every corner

The Beast has no memory
when he sleeps he is pinched by the demons
he's consumed

When he wakes he is wet with humiliation
and gnashes flies between his teeth

He is lost here among the pale skies of the day
and the neon of the night

The Beast speaks with many tongues
and across his mind runs a veritable causeway
of hallucinations

Sometimes he stumbles upon obstacles
not seeing what is in front of him
for what is in front of him is his mirrored self

The Beast eats his own excrement and so daily
poisons himself
The Beast feeds on his own rage and so knows no
nourishment

The Beast is alone in the dark and so lights his
way with his own anger
The Beast is doomed to die of cold in a damp
corner

Eyes staring
Belly rumbling

The Beast is not organized

La Bécéde

Breathless
the ascent has calmed me

Tortoise shell the dog careers
through slopes of fern and
sticky bush

To the north behind
the evening sun

cold hills and mountains
Auvergne grazing
Elephants' back

Wild Moon

We dance under the wild moon
The music provided by the breeze and
the hiss of the rollers hitting the sand
and shingle.

We kneel, face to face, forehead
against forehead; hands placed
palm down on the back of the other's.

Animals don't use words to say
"I love you"
The wild moon speaks for us.

The black bitch returns from her hunt,
places herself in between us,
within the comfort of the pack

Then she moves away, slowly,
slim, muscular, and sits fixing her gaze
on the full wild moon.

Suddenly she utters a long howl
we join in,
the pack dancing on the beach,

the light of the wild moon casting
black bands and sparkling yellow.

Our steps home disturb
a small crab feasting.
It scuttles swiftly out of our way.

The wild moon leads us homewards.

Tectonic Platins

You run into me

I collide with you

You slide over me

I subduct you

You chimney me

I magma you

You hotspot me

I rise over you

Two continents now one

Comfortably

You lava me

I lava you

Bikkie Goes Forth in the No

I
you
me
the unnamed six hundred
and sixty-six names
of the deity
go forth in that
no-time
that the surviving beat poets
– and that is going back a
long way covering
many bodies collapsed
at the road side –
who I still meet a
couple of times a year
they say they still tell and write about
the something nothing
but it's like screaming into a water barrel
made of corrugated iron
as the water flows in
where is your voice?
Some go forth into
the half hour time
that I have known
about all morning
and have done nothing
to make longer

Bikkie the dog who
I accompany on walks
goes forth in the no-time,
I go forth into the some time

In the dog's universal view
We're both being rained
on at the same time
but the drops of enlightenment
take longer to reach her,
she is lower to the ground

Bikkie would say she
stays drier longer
therefore I am more exposed than her
and therefore I am more vulnerable
and need enlightenment earlier
I shrug and say
The theatre goes forth
in Japan to the No
Joyce ends a book
with the word Yes

Yes No
The theatre of the Yes
is where I live
No is where I hope
to go

I hope you have at least understood nothing

Love That Goes Round in a Loop

Cat asleep on my knee
Moon is up but the clouds are up to tricks

Where's that horrid dog?
Oh god it's brought home a snake and still alive

Ah! It's of the grass variety
and seems happy in saliva

where are you now sweet Sara?
You're not drinking sweet condensed milk tea with me
Tonight in life's trenches

I'll smuggle your body into
Asnières pet cemetery
Hide you among the cats and the ponies

I'll top out your grave with the sweetest of stones
Engraved with the heads of your dogs and your cats and
Classical Motor bikes, their tanks in bright gold
The mason's handwriting says till erosion us parts
In nice curly letters: here comes the chisel!

"To Sara
from Nomis
With love
that goes round
in a
LOOP."

Edo to Auvers

The sudden view decided me
I who am so indecisive.

Far below
the River Oise
glittering slate
studded with swans
parasols skiffs
The frame of the carriage window
surrounded a springtime landscape by Van Gogh
And somewhere was de Maupassant
reading behind a tree awaiting his creamy Norman maid

My ticket was for further on
but if I stepped down at Auvers sur Oise
I could be within it all right now

So at Auvers I stepped down into a croc of tourists
on the lam from Notre Dame
Before I left the station I turned to look one final time
at what I was abandoning

a chance encounter of the romantic species

I saw her wise unfamiliar face and waving fingertips
through the window of the red auto-express
she and I had been connected
for an hour now we were separated
forever by the universe width of a platform

Then I followed the signs:
Town Centre Church Graveyard Absinthe Bar where Van Gogh lived
The doctor's house where he remained uncured of poverty
how could anything else be fixed?

Up a lane I walked
boxed in on both sides by geraniums tulips
windows left wide open for the canaries to breathe
and the smells of coffee and Blanquette de veau
to escape
and there just far enough ahead for it to seem
obsessive
the millionth girl from Edo
brave Japanese face smooth among the barbarians
neat Gauguin blue pleated skirt and rolled orange
umbrella
in search of
Ban Gofu
and his funeral stone

There had been a pleated skirt too but Rhineland cream
back in the choo choo train as it nearly puffed steam over rattling bridges
and starched white blouse
rolling
curling
blonde hair
and strong Germanish jaw
feminine spirit with a voice pitched
to stroke
to hypnotize
producing
climbing heat
(what defines our tastes?)
She said, 'I'll be the one who feels for two experience the lot... till I can share it out, maybe with you. My horoscope said I'm prone to love at first sight.'

What magic words from a stranger in a train. They nearly got me... I can be flattered like you or you... But the window waved its landscape wand and I was already climbing hillsides in my mind. (You see, I have learned to love my solitude...it's a gift of gold and never dulls).

'Travel on with me, come and watch me get my ironing
done.' (But I've been caught by wiles like that before)
But we kissed,
familiar souls and faces quite unknown.

And then I was free of her,
the crocodile of tourists with legs like teeth,
free from the girl from Edo and her pleated skirt,
free of everyone but the view of the church at Auvers
they had built according to Van Gogh's sketch

I was shocked.
They'd misconstrued it as
they'd misconstrued
the man...

The roof, the walls, the porch, the nave,
Where was that gold and purple blue-print
we have learnt to love
(though we hate all art)

I looked
the girl from Edo looked

We looked and looked but
all the lines were straight.

Are You Blossoming

We're back at Kilometer Zero once again, where we
intersect when we've followed paths apart

this year the cherry trees stand free before the store look
like gypsy prisoners
arms raised in mock defeat wearing tattered mauve and
pink white shirts
while the ones boxed behind the iron grills look less
guilty, far more free

you materialize this way each time we meet: space opens
up its door and there you stand with simple questions
that take me years to answer if I can
are you blossoming? you ask

at least you are,

that's one way I elude the question, and I'm good at that,
as our lips brush each others' cheeks, I'm happy that I
shaved in time
you've always been concerned that I concern myself with
me
rather than what others are and be

is that 'blossoming'?

you're wearing wide trousers from hip to golden heel, it
takes a moment for me to take you in: is this some sign
that you've drawn new lines upon yourself?

still green eyed blonde haired
larger than your size
you say,

I think I saw you *rue de Nesle*, I was rushing to the play,
almost but not quite late, I saw you striding
head in air, you seemed to look and then pass on, who's
that handsome man I thought, was it you?
I wasn't sure you'd noticed me so I hurried on...

handsome? well now I need to hear more words like that,

I hadn't seen you but I must have sensed that you were
there, I go wandering the VIth when I want to think of
colour light and gold-framed art, the nine
blue colours that we call the sky, the rooftops, columns
of my flying life, the river that I flow across,
in all of that you have your queen-brick place, my dear.

you don't like it if I tell the moody truth
you have your own arrows to deflect

are you blossoming?
(you see I haven't answered yet)

you yourself are blossoming because you know that
seasons follow on
I'm learning that the summer is just half the year, the
other half I get it wrong
you teach me too that absence can be timed to fit with
presence, one long note
and then rich silence till the next

we've become like music you and I,
not scarred but scored

are you blossoming?

Yes,
I suppose I am.

Père Lachaise I (December 2014)

Voices, steps, fading voices,
blown away in the noise of cemetery wind.
Somewhere between
here and there
leaves, small animals, gravel specks,
wings fanning.
Last goodbyes –
How long does the dark lantern
keep burning ?
Will I too fly away ?

Last Goodbyes,First Day Dead (Père Lachaise II)

Steps fading away
as gravel scrapes, last voices heard in the distance
faint, familiar. They've said
the final of goodbyes.
Alone for the first night
in the new cosmos.
It had been there all the time,
just unrecognized.
Not here now,
not there yet.
Squeek. The company of small animals
a low moaning as the wind moves among
the stones
clatter of large wings briefly,
card fanning of the small ones
Am I alone now?
Am I me myself?

The Song of Sappho (from a fragment)

The words that I sing are but things made of air
but they're real for all that, they have lives of their own

The words that I write are but signs on a page
but they build a new world whether you read them or not

If nobody sings or reads them aloud they're not mute for all that
they can live on their own they can sleep a long time

They're my life after death
they're my soul in the air

Biography

Simon Folland Green was born in London under the bombs. He worked in London on the creative side of advertising, then he fell in love in Paris and stayed there to live. Later he fell in love with Andalusia and stayed there to live. He now lives on an island off the coast of Brittany.

As well as writing poetry, he has published translations of major authors such as Louis Ferdinand Céline and Claude Simon.